

COLLEGE STAFF

A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS

Preparation points

1. **Ask how things are going, and make sure you listen** – recruitment isn't all about talking!
2. **Some college staff are isolated**, and may have little idea about what trade unions do. So concentrate on introducing the work of UNISON, and giving some idea of what we do.
3. **Look at UNISON's colleges and campaign pages on its website** to familiarise yourself with prominent issues and how UNISON is campaigning to improve matters.
4. **Before you visit, read through UNISON's colleges newsletter** which features updates on current issues. Some members are very poorly paid so be prepared to discuss arguments about the cost of joining, emphasising the low subscription rates for the low paid and the cost of not joining.
5. **Check you have some information to leave about the benefits of joining UNISON.** Remember that colleagues are often pushed for time and may be scared to talk to you especially if they are on zero-hour or temporary contracts, work for a contractor or have an anti-union manager.
6. **Make sure that you follow up with another meeting or a phone call.** Keep a record of who you met and what the key issues are so that you can continue to support college members and recruit potential members.
7. **Tell them that UNISON has been campaigning to defend and improve how they are treated locally and nationally.** We have succeeded in negotiations with national agreements on, for example, parental leave and avoiding redundancies. UNISON is campaigning for the Living Wage in colleges and has successfully challenged employers in court.
8. **Have a think about some of the ways that UNISON membership has helped you** or the team you work in. Tell people about it.
9. **Don't worry if you are asked a question and you don't know the answer!** Try to find out the answer from someone in the UNISON branch.
10. **Let our members and potential members know about the resources available:** the UNISON website; UNISON Direct; local branch and regional support. By joining UNISON you're not alone at work any more.

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Conversation points

1. **UNISON is the biggest public services trade union**, and the lead union for support staff in education. UNISON branches are run by trained workplace representatives who know local employers and work in the community. If you don't yet have a rep in your college try to identify who could become a representative so that members get the most out of their membership.
2. **UNISON negotiates across colleges on issues like pay and equalities** and other issues like holidays, sick pay, and health and safety. There may be issues in your college that need tackling – find out what they are and which are the most important ones to start negotiating on.
3. **UNISON campaigns for people and public services**, against cuts and job losses and for greater equality at work and in society. UNISON's campaign priorities are set by members. What are the priority campaigns for workers in this college? Is it bringing in the Living Wage? Implementation of national pay rises? Stress at work?
4. **UNISON provides a range of other benefits for members**, including access to legal advice, a helpline, member discounts, training courses and seminars.
5. **UNISON knows that many of you feel vulnerable in your jobs** – but we can provide the advice and support you need to help you do your job safely. We also help to negotiate better training from your employer.
6. **UNISON is campaigning to improve funding and resources** for further education as well as working conditions as the two issues are related. Cuts in funding threaten jobs, pay and conditions. UNISON is working alongside other unions and the employers to call on the government to provide increased and stable funding for colleges.
7. **UNISON also wants to see improved standards of education and welfare for students**. We work closely with the NUS campaigning for free education, for learner and workforce representation in college decisions, and for local and accessible colleges at the heart of the community.
8. **UNISON provides advice and support for members facing problems at work**. We represent members collectively and individually, supporting them in restructures and college mergers, and we campaign for equal pay at work. UNISON's Apprenticeship Charter sets out the standards that all apprentices should expect in terms of training and employment.
9. **UNISON is focused on making sure that staff get improvements that are negotiated nationally**. Too many colleges refuse to implement national agreements. That's why strength at local level is so important.
10. **UNISON leads major campaigns across public services** exposing poor employment practice, like temporary and zero-hour contracts and low and unequal pay. College staff are increasingly threatened by privatisation and outsourcing which UNISON opposes locally and nationally. Education is not for sale and neither is the workforce.